

# EMANUEL D. RUDOLPH AS A BOOK REVIEWER FOR *CHOICE*

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## ABSTRACT

Emanuel D. Rudolph (1927–1992), polar lichenologist and historian of botany, held academic positions at Wellesley College (1955–1961) and The Ohio State University (1961–1992). This paper outlines the history of *Choice*, a book review serial, and Emanuel Rudolph's role as a reviewer beginning the year that *Choice* was established (1964). Important factors influencing his decision to write book reviews were: a commitment to serve colleges, an avid interest in book collecting, and sharing a similar philosophy with science historian George Sarton, who stated that those qualified should review books "because it was their professional duty to do so" (*Choice* 26:1093. 1989). For 28 publications Rudolph wrote 195 book reviews. Of these 79 appeared in *Choice* in the disciplines of botany (58), polar science (9), history of science (6), and other biological sciences (5). His book reviews demonstrate analytical and descriptive writing skills as well as a breadth of knowledge in these subject areas. Through his book reviews Rudolph provided collection development and teaching enrichment assistance for college librarians and faculty.

## ABSTRACT

Emanuel D. Rudolph (1927–1992), liquenólogo polar e historiador de botánica, ocupó cargos académicos en Wellesley College (1955–1961) y la Universidad Estatal de Ohio (1961–1992). Este artículo bosqueja la historia de *Choice*, una serie de revisiones de libros, y el papel de Emanuel Rudolph como revisor empezando en el año en que se estableció *Choice* (1964). Fueron factores importantes que influenciaron su decisión de escribir revisiones de libros: el compromiso de servir a las universidades, su gran interés en la colección de libros, y compartir una filosofía similar con el historiador de la ciencia George Sarton, quien manifestó que las personas cualificadas deberían revisar libros "porque era su deber profesional hacerlo" (*Choice* 26:1093. 1989). Rudolph escribió 195 revisiones de libros para 28 publicaciones. De ellas 79 aparecieron en *Choice* en las disciplinas de botánica (58), ciencia polar (9), historia de la ciencia (6), y otras ciencias biológicas (5). Sus revisiones de libros demuestran unas habilidades analíticas y descriptivas así como un amplio conocimiento en los temas de estas áreas. Mediante sus revisiones de libros Rudolph promovió el desarrollo de la colección y el apoyo enriquecedor a la docencia para sus compañeros bibliotecarios y la facultad.

Biographical accounts of Emanuel D. Rudolph (1927–1992), polar lichenologist and historian of botany, were written by Ronald L. Stuckey (1994, 1995). Additional knowledge of Rudolph's scholarly endeavors is revealed through his book reviewing for *Choice*, a serial devoted to the pub-

lication of reviews.

The book review as known today is a relatively new form of communication, having emerged and developed after the 16th century. Its beginnings precede the advent of printing when oral criticisms of an individual's work were made. For example, on the Athenian stage during Aristophanes' comedy, *The Frogs*, a dramatized critique was made of the works of Aeschylus and Euripides. During the late 17th century when newspapers appeared, scholarly notation about books took the form of book notices to acquaint scholars with their colleagues' publications (Stueart 1978). A book review, an article published in a newspaper or periodical, announces a new book and describes and evaluates it (Donovan 1996). The *North American Review*, established in 1815, was the first periodical in the United States to provide book reviews.

Beginning mid-1963 librarians in liberal arts colleges throughout the United States received letters explaining reasons for publishing a new review journal, *Choice*, aimed at undergraduate libraries. They were asked to assist by recommending faculty at their campuses for the purpose of writing reviews. Similar announcements appeared in educational journals.

#### *CHOICE*, A PERIODICAL PUBLISHING BOOK REVIEWS

Although in the planning stages during the late 1950s, *Choice* did not begin publication until March 1964 under an initial grant from the Council on Library Resources through the Ford Foundation (Clark 1964). First housed in Olin Library, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT, *Choice* editorial offices subsequently moved to 42 Broad Street, and later to 100 Riverview Center, both in Middletown. Richard K. Gardner was the founding editor of *Choice*, and the "architect" of its reviewing program (Sabosik 1994).

*Choice*, a monthly review periodical, publishes book reviews for the Association of College and Research Libraries, a division of the American Library Association. Although most of the reviews in *Choice* are for books, electronic products, and microform materials are also covered. These reviews primarily support undergraduate library collection development. *Choice* reviews are also now available on CD-ROM and online. In 1988 a publishing plan for *Choice* was approved (Sabosik 1989) and a selection policy was published in 1993 (Anonymous 1993).

The editors of *Choice* give reviewers suggestions to assist them in looking at a book. One of the most important services of the reviewer, or subject consultant, is to place a book in the literature of its subject area and to identify its undergraduate audience: freshman, senior, or advanced student. In noting the book's contents consultants consider (Anonymous [1965]): (1) What is the standard work with which the book invites comparison?;

(2) What is the relationship of the book to it? Portion of subject covered? Approach?; (3) What is the authority of the author?; (4) On what principle does the author select and order his material?; (5) What is the author's point of view?; (6) How well does he write?; (7) What is the quality of references and illustrative features (bibliography, index, map, illustrations)?; and (8) Is the book a new edition? If so, is the revision significant to warrant a new edition?

The importance and impact of volunteer reviewers were remembered and recognized by the *Choice* administration. On at least an annual basis the *Choice* editor communicated news and extended thanks to its reviewers in a memorandum, issued through the early 1970s as "Report to Consultants," and later as a cover letter accompanied by an annual "Reviewer Update Form." Sentiments of gratitude for the contribution of reviewers were expressed on numerous occasions by *Choice* editors. Especially poignant were the comments of Editor Richard K. Gardner, who stated in a letter dated 9 April 1973 that "your loyalty is much appreciated by the staff of *Choice* and also by the library community at large. . . . Without your unselfish help *Choice* could not continue to produce its 6,500–7,000 reviews a year." Reviewers were a respected and integral component of the publishing venture. Their comments and opinions were often solicited by *Choice* editors if new policies were being considered. When new consultants were needed for reviewing, existing reviewers were asked for their recommendations of colleagues. Besides keeping the books that were reviewed, consultants also enjoyed the intrinsic benefits of reading books in their area of research, and keeping up-to-date in their area of specialty. In 1991 reviewers were offered special discounts on subscriptions to *Choice*.

#### EMANUEL D. RUDOLPH AS A BOOK REVIEWER

Rudolph read about *Choice* and its need for reviewers in the April 1964 issue of *Scholarly Books in America*. He wrote a letter, dated 1 May 1964, to the editors of *Choice*, informing them of his keen interest in writing reviews. He mentioned that he had a strong interest in undergraduate libraries, having had some experience with them at Wellesley College, where he taught for six years, and at The Ohio State University, where he then was working with a committee to purchase books in the history of science. Although not mentioned in his letter, Rudolph also was an avid book collector. He and his wife Ann amassed an impressive, personal library of 53,000 volumes of books in botany and natural history, including an important children's collection. Twenty-five years later Rudolph wrote about another factor which influenced his interest in writing reviews. He stated that "many years ago, I read a paper by the late George Sarton (1950), founder of the field of the history of science in this country, that urged

those qualified to review books because it was their professional duty to do so" (Clark 1989). Rudolph took Sarton's comments seriously, as he eventually wrote 195 book reviews for 28 publications. While an assistant professor of Botany at Wellesley College, Massachusetts, Emanuel Rudolph published his first book review in the January 1959 issue of *Ecology* (Rudolph 1959). Rudolph wrote his first review for *Choice* in October 1965 ((Rudolph 1965). For *Choice* he wrote 79 reviews in the disciplines of botany (58), polar science (9), history of science (6), and other biological sciences (5).

The language used by Rudolph in his reviews was pointed, but descriptive. In citing the weaknesses of a book, he would refer to its "stiff translation," "inaccurate statements," "dry" style, or "poor bibliography." In stating the strengths of a book, he would comment that it had "authoritative coverage," "superior, useful illustrations," "stimulating" text, or a "masterful summary" of the field. Sometimes Rudolph extolled a book for undergraduates, such as the monograph *Fungi: Delight of Curiosity* by Harold J. Brodie (1978). About this book, he said, "All libraries . . . should have this volume that could easily spark a future mycologist" (Rudolph 1978). Rudolph's last review for *Choice* was published posthumously (Rudolph 1992).

Besides writing reviews for *Choice*, Rudolph participated in three other projects: (1) providing bibliographical citations for the revision of *Books for College Libraries* (Association of College and Research Libraries 1975), (2) submitting entries for *Opening Day Collection*, a special supplement to *Choice* (Gardner et al. 1974), and (3) contributing his comments to the silver anniversary issue of *Choice* (Clark 1989). Concerning the latter he stated that:

A distinct advantage of writing book reviews is that the books are examined with a critical eye for the audience for whom the review is written. In the case of *Choice*, my thoughts always are, would this be a book that I would want various kinds of students to find in their libraries? This perspective takes me outside of my own limited professional interests and expands my horizon. The second advantage of *Choice* reviewing is that it forces me sometimes to read critically books in my discipline that are not exactly in my particular limited field of research. This too has broadened my horizon. In short, being a *Choice* reviewer has made me a more rounded teacher and researcher, and for that I am very grateful.

Although Emanuel Rudolph's predominant book reviewing role was with *Choice*, he also held other related responsibilities. He was the book review editor of *The Ohio Journal of Science* (1965–1974). As editor (1982–1985) of *The Plant Science Bulletin*, he oversaw the book review section.

Rudolph's book reviews demonstrate analytical and descriptive writing skills and a breadth of knowledge of books in subject areas of botany, polar science, and history of biology. Through his book reviews Rudolph pro-

vided collection development and teaching enrichment assistance for college librarians and faculty.

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#### ARCHIVAL RESOURCES CITED AND CONSULTED

Emanuel D. Rudolph's archives dealing with his association with *Choice* are housed in the Herbarium, Museum of Biological Diversity, The Ohio State University, 1315 Kinnear Road, Columbus, Ohio 43212-1192 and curated by Dr. Ronald L. Stuckey, Professor Emeritus and Curator Emeritus, Department of Plant Biology, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

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